S. May, Jr
Leicester
Mass

L. L. Hastes
Aug. 3, 1856.

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Worcester, Aug. 2, 1856

Dear May — Yours of the 17th ult. was duly receiv'd. I should have answered it promptly but for want of time, though Abby thought you would not expect an answer. When I tell you that my fields have yielded a crop of more than 45 tons of hay, that one ~~acre~~ of my hands sickened & soon out just before we commenced haying, that the other was, for some time, disabled from a cut upon the arm with a scythe, & that with him I was obliged to depend entirely upon occasional help, ~~in~~ by the day, & that scarce, & often of the poorest kind, you will readily understand that I have had but few leisure hours during the past for or five weeks. The hardest part of my work, however, is now over, & I hope soon to be more at liberty.

But could I have had the time, I should not have attended the Brooklyn Meeting — at least, I should not have gone there as an agent of the American Society.

The difference between Mr. Burleigh & myself is so great that I deem it inexpedient for us to meet before a pro-slavery audience as recognized agents of the same ~~Society~~ Society. I consider his anti-slavery as radically defective in moral character, & in its tendency subversive of the fundamental principles of our enterprise, & shall feel bound to say so, if the occasion requires it, as it might, were we to occupy the same platform. To justify the suppression of a slave insurrection, under any conceivable circumstances, is, as it seems to me, mentally to yield the whole question in controversy between us & the slave power, & I cannot endorse the genuineness of any man's anti-slavery who does this. I think it best, therefore, that Mr. Burleigh & I should have different fields of labor assigned us, if we are to act as agents of the same Society.

You say there is a doubt in your mind as to whether I care to act as an agent of the American, or the Mass. A. S. Society, & you wish to know that doubt

Solon. In reply I have only to say that from my first connection with the anti-Slavery cause I resolved to become its public advocate to the extent of my ability, & in prosecuting my labors in this department to receive the cooperation of any & every one who was willing to lend me his assistance, without regard to his condition or character; & I have never been called to change this resolution. I have never solicited an agency of any Society, & never declined one, & probably never shall. Should the Republican party appoint me their agent, I should certainly accept the appointment; but my special work, in that case, would be ~~to labor for~~ the conversion of the party by getting their sins in order before them. I do not regard the agent as at all responsible for the conduct of his principal, though the principal is unquestionably responsible for the conduct of his agent. I have, therefore, no objection to acting as agent of the A. A. S. Society, if desired to do so. Our continued connection is a question

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for them, not me, to decide. For a time I hesitate to continue our relations, but my doubts are solved, & I am now ready to act for them, or for any other body which may desire my services. But it must be understood that those services are to be employed ~~in the~~ exclusively in the work of giving freedom to the slave, & that too, in accordance with the best convictions of my own understanding. If you make appointments for me I shall continue to fulfill them to the best of my ability, & if the A. A. S. Society offers me aid any I shall not decline to accept it; but I hope & trust that you & they will feel entirely free to decline this service, if it should be thought at all inconsistent with the best interests of the anti slavery cause. Whether I act as agent of the Society or not is to me, personally, a matter of entire indifference. I shall continue to advocate the cause of emancipation to the extent of my ability wherever a door is open, & it is for the Com. to decide whether my usefulness will be enhanced by acting as their agent. Let them in this matter act entirely untrammelled by personal considerations & their action cannot fail to secure my approval;

In regard to the report you have of what I said, ~~you~~ have been in Worcester, of the influence of our Society, I presume it must be incorrect, for I have no recollection of ever holding such an opinion and of course could not express it. What I said there I suppose was what I have said every where of late, viz. that our Society is doing nothing, at present, to propagate, successfully its distinctive doctrine of non-fellowship of slaveholders — that, on the contrary, the number of those who hold this doctrine instead of increasing was actually diminishing. Of the correctness of this opinion I suppose there can be no doubt in any mind at all informed in regard to the state of our cause. And when we see S. F. May avow his purpose to vote for Fremont, & the organ of the Society eulogize the oration in which he makes the avowal, & commend it to the abolitionists for perusal it may well be questioned whether the

Society itself has not, in fact, practically renounced its distinctive character, & merged itself in the general anti-Slavery movement. But I have no time now to discuss this point, if it were desirable to do so. Suffice it to say that, whatever my relations to the Society, I shall ever feel at liberty to criticise what I believe to be its faults, & to use the utmost of my influence to direct its course in that channel which seems to me to promise the largest measure of success. What those relations shall be it will remain for you & the Committee to decide. My Sabbaths, during the Autumn, I shall devote to the advocacy of the anti-Slavery cause, so far as I may have invitations to speak. More than this I cannot promise. Nor can I at present, take the responsibility of getting up meetings for myself. My domestic affairs will require most of my attention till cold weather, when I hope to give myself, as usual, entirely to lecturing.

Yours, with sincere regard,

W. L. Foster

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